

## **James Hudson Interview Summary**

Interviewee: James Hudson

Interviewers: Dane Olsson and Michael Williamson

Interview Date: October 10, 2014

Location: North Newport News Community Center, Newport News, Virginia

Length: One audio file, WAV format, 92:01

**THE INTERVIEWEE:** Dr. James Hudson was a very interesting, well-traveled man who encountered various circumstances where he was affected by the civil rights movement. He lived in Newport News throughout his childhood years, attending the segregated Carver High School. In 1960, he moved from the Newport News to begin his long-term career serving in the United States military. There he encountered various forms of segregation as well, such as the self-imposed separation of the races in the cafeteria, or when the soldiers left the base. He lived all around the country and even the world, but encountered much deeper rooted racism in Germany, where the children were curious and intrigued by the differences of African-Americans. He did various jobs in the computer and teletyping fields in the military and befriended both white and black soldiers. After the military, he attained his Doctor of Ministry at Providence Theological Seminary. Dr. Hudson attributes many of his fonder memories to the close-knit community he lived in during his childhood years. Everyone knew each other on a first name basis and, as such, would all look out for each other, almost forming a large neighborhood family. Dr. James Hudson offered fantastic insight into how things were in the Newport News community during the civil rights movement, showing that a strong, cohesive neighborhood can help overcome adversity that was present during that time.

**INTERVIEWERS:** Dane Olsson and Michael Williamson are students at Christopher Newport University. They are a part of the Hampton Roads Oral History Project through Dr. Laura Puaca's History 341 course: The Long Civil Rights Movement in the fall 2014 semester.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW:** The interview was held at the North Newport News Community Center. The space was rather noisy, with people talking and phones ringing but this did not stop interrupt the flow of the interview. Dr. Hudson was very eager to explain his experiences both in and out of Newport News. The interviewers took time at the beginning of the interview to make the interviewee feel welcome and comfortable.

## **Dr. James Hudson--Transcript**

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### **START OF INTERVIEW**

Dane Olsson: So, basically what we're doing is--. We'd like to take what's called a life history approach. So we're definitely going to start with a few questions about your childhood.

James Hudson: Okay.

DO: So, just based off-- right off the bat--where and when were you born?

JH: Born in Newport News, Virginia, August 20, 1941. So, right here.

DO: Cool. Okay. perfect.

Michael Williamson: Do you remember the name of the hospital?

JH: I think I was born at home.

MW: Were you?

JH: Yeah, probably the house that was right behind here. I am pretty sure I was born at home. But I know that Riverside Hospital was--. Well, probably not Riverside. I was born at home, 606 Center Avenue, right over here. That's what I think that's what my mother told me. That's correct.

DO: So what did your parents do for a living then going off of--?

JH: Well, my father was in the shipyard and my mother was a homemaker at the time. But my father passed away at an early age, probably about--he was about 31. He had quite an extensive illness and then my mother had to go to work because she had three children. So she did domestic work for most of her life until she joined up with Nachman's Department Store and worked there in sales for a long time until she retired.

DO: Interesting, very interesting. What impact did that have on your life, with the mother working?

JH: Well I can't say that it had--. Well, maybe it did have an impact on my life. Well, we moved in with my grandparents right around the block from here and that was interesting because there was a lot of women. And that was the biggest impact it had on my life because I think me and my grandfather were the only men there. And everything else was maybe seven people in the household and my grandparents. I think, at an early age, my learning experience from women was that I wanted to write a book about women. So tremendous impact there.

DO: Yeah.

JH: About women, you know. So my grandfather was basically my male mentor, so to speak. But my grandmother and my mother had the most impact on my life as far as bringing up and growing up and guiding me along, okay. But my father being passed, you know, passed away, when maybe I was about six or seven or something like that. So, you know, it just seemed like everything was normal to me, except that he wasn't there.

MW: Did you ever write a book about women?

JH: No, not yet.

MW: Still in the plans?

JH: I am looking at so many books out here now on women I looked at T.D. Jakes and his thing is about women and so many other books out here on women, you know. But I-- . It all comes back to me now that I, you know, might want to. But it was on my mind for the longest time to write something about women and the impact that women have had on my life and have had maybe on my family's life. But, it still might be in the works.

MW: I hope so. [laughter]

JH: But I haven't done anything on women yet.

OD: You would have a firsthand account, definitely.

JH: Oh yeah, yeah.

MW: Okay, are you an only child or do you have brothers and sisters?

JH: No, I had two sisters and just myself. I am the only son, and one of my sisters has passed. My younger sister passed away about 1997. So three children. My father-- My mother remarried after about, let's see now, I was approximately eighteen. Seventeen or Eighteen years old.

MW: Okay.

JH: And so she had two other daughters, but still I am the only son. [laughter]

DO: Well, since you said you grew up around here, what was the area like back in the--.

JH: It was a family, a very community type of area. Initially, the streets were dirt, weren't paved. A lot of ditches on the side. But it was a community where they say--whoever came up with the term--it takes a village to raise a child, that type of environment, you know.

DO: Very close.

JH: A very close-knit community. A lot of folks related--were related--in this area. Basically it was three streets, North, Center, and South Avenue [that were] considered basically North Newport News. And the neighbors watched out for the kids, so it was that type of environment where, if I was down the street somewhere, which was--. This used to be my playground here, this area here. I live a block up the street there. So, if my mother went to work, the neighbors looked out for me. If I was doing something wrong, they might crack me or--. [laughter] Of course, my mother was going to learn about it in the evening. So, you know, there was no crime. The doors was always open, no doors locked at that kind of time. So it was a very open environment, very friendly, and either folks were called by their nickname--. Mostly folks were just called by their nickname. A lot of folks now, I don't even know their names. I just know them by their nicknames, you know. That's the way we just grew up back then. So it was a very friendly, very friendly neighborhood.

DO: You really don't see that often anywhere anymore, really. You know it's tough.

JH: You don't see that community-type of environment.

MW: No open doors.

JH: Nuh uh. You know, it changes. But, of course, that was the environment then. You know, very friendly, very neighborly. Everybody might have been a cousin, cousin this, or cousin that, you know. We don't know who is related to everybody but somebody is related to you. You know, your next door neighbors or so forth like that. But very, very friendly environment.

MW: Now how long did you live in that house down the street?

JH: I lived there till I was seven--. Sixteen--. Sixteen years. Sixteen years. And then my mother married and I moved down to 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

MW: Okay.

JH: And I stayed there for maybe, until I graduated from high school. And I worked one year then I went to the U.S. Air Force, then I was gone. [laughter] Said I was never coming back, but that's not true, you know. Came back, right back here, same neighborhood, you know. So I spent twenty-one years in the Air Force.

DO: Yeah.

MW: What were the main differences did you see between living here and down on 31<sup>st</sup> Street?

JH: Initially it was a different type of environment. Now there was a community type of environment, but it was more developed on 31<sup>st</sup> street. Had streets, sidewalks, lamps, lights out on the parking lot. But I didn't know the folks down there like I knew them up here. So it took a while at my age to get to learn, you know, different folks there. But I was assuming that some of the folks on this street, like on the 1200 block of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, they all knew each other there. But you go out two or three blocks out, it's a little different. You don't know everybody like we knew here. So it was more--. I would say, at the time, it was more modern than this community.

DO: Yeah.

JH: Because we had dirt roads and no sidewalks. It was more country of an environment even though we didn't have a lot of farms, anything like that. But it was still very undeveloped at the time. And downtown Newport News was more developed at that time

down there. So it was a more progressive type of just an environment. Movie theatres, and places to go to eat, you know. So we were country. [laughter]

DO: What kind of segue into the environment, what were the race relations like in the Newport News area?

JH: Well, at that time, there really wasn't on my mind, you know, about race until maybe I was a teenager as far as I went to a segregated school right across the street over there. I went to George W. Carver High School. I went here, elementary school, this--. The building was here. What do you call it? North Newport News Elementary School. It was a two room building here, so it was segregated there. This whole community was primarily black. I don't think there was any white or Caucasian living in the community at that time. Now, being young, I wasn't--and no transportation--I wasn't in my early years too much outside of the community, you know, as far as traveling, unless it was with my parents or whatever. But, as far as going out to eat, you know, [there were] a couple incidents, that [I] encountered as a young child. There was a diner down the street called--I think it was the Blue Star Diner.

DO: Okay, I think, it's still here.

MW: It's still there right?

JH: It's still up there, down there, you know. And we would walk up and down the street, you know. [It] sold a couple donuts or whatever. And you know, I went in there one day to get a donut, so I had to exit out the front. Told me to go around to the back, to get the donut. So I don't know if I did or not. I don't think I did. But I know I remember that time. The busses were segregated. You had to go to the back of the busses if you went on the bus. Had to go all the way to the back, as far back as you could get. Nothing up on the

front like that. Housing areas were segregated. You know, no, mixing of the races as far as communities and housing and so forth.

DO: Yeah.

JH: So that's why most of the folks up here congregated toward the communities that we lived in like that. But it didn't have a tremendous impact other than the schooling. I remember the books that we used over at--specifically Carver--were used books from Newport News High School, across the tracks and across the other side of Newport News. So sometimes the books weren't the best books and most of them had been written in and so forth. So we had to use those books, over there, whether they were torn or whatever. Now, I never had to ride the bus to school. I always walked to school, but walking to school was a chore sometimes when the busses, when the kids were going to Newport News High riding down the street. You know, whatever came out of the language, or whatever came out of the busses, as we were walking down the street, you know we would catch it.

DO: Yeah.

JH: And so it was sometimes a verbal battle between the busses and so forth like that. But it--. Overall, it wasn't really very much consciousness because we were in our own community.

DO: A bubble, yeah.

JH: You know, so, that's a good word there. Sort of a bubble, isolated. When we went out to shop, you know--. For example, in Nachman's, [a department store in downtown Newport News from 1931 to 1968] I remember my mother worked in the basement. And



that's where most of the blacks at that time shopped, you know, shopped in there. But they had to go to a certain area of the stores like that.

DO: Mmhhh, yeah.

JH: And it didn't--. Race relations didn't [pause] get really bad until about, let's see, the early '60s. I think I was gone by then. '59, '60, '60s like that [was] when the sit-ins started happening at the department stores. I'm trying to remember this name of the store: Grant's department store on Washington Avenue over there. I think they tried a couple sit-ins there. But ours weren't as bad as they were, you know, in North Carolina, Greensboro, those areas like that. So we kind of evolved. After that, I was gone in the military--when the time that when they were trying to integrate the schools. In fact, I wasn't here when the schools integrated I was believe in what--between '60s and '70s, '71, somewhere in there.

DO: '60?

JH: It's when they started integrating the schools like that. So I wasn't here then.

DO: Yeah.

JH: So I can't talk about how it was. But for me, personally, you know, wasn't that bad. You just lived in your own bubble. [laughter] You knew what you had to do and just keep on rolling. [laughter]

DO: And Carver was a newer school correct?

JH: Mmhhh, built in 1949.

DO: Yeah.

JH: 1949, Carver was--. I went here [North Newport News Elementary, the site of the North Newport News Community Center where the interview was conducted] two years.

It was a two room school here. And I went here first grade, second grade. [In] 1949, Carver was built and I think it carried from grades one through eleven at the time.

DO: Okay.

JH: And so it was sort of, it was a newer school.

DO: Yeah.

JH: And now they've added on to it, built on to it.

DO: Yeah, and so the conditions were nice and--.

JH: It was nice because you didn't know any better, didn't know what else to have. Our shop was--. I knew it was small, you know. As I went into my higher years, started taking shop. Didn't have all of the equipment that I knew we could have. And we start trying to make things, we didn't have any. And it was always told how the equipment over at Newport News High was so much better. Better equipped, larger, stuff like that. But, you know, never been in the building so I didn't know, you know, what it was. But as far as us, it was newer, you know. Segregated staff and everything so it was a segregated school. But it was nice, it was nice. As far as we were concerned, it was nice.

MW: So did you like participate in any activities at the high school?

JH: Didn't play basketball, didn't play football. Good cheerleader. I wasn't a "cheerleader" [laughter] but I was a cheerleader. No, I was on the editorial staff of the newspaper and the choir, the music department. I was class president of my senior year [of] high school. But I didn't play any athletics. I was, you know, I was a little skinny, thin guy, you know. If I got hit I probably would have been broken. [laughter] I wanted to play basketball but, I think in my junior year, I broke my arm in the gym class and I think that just turned everything around. I wasn't about to go and break any other bones on

that, you know. But mostly, I chose to be on the newspaper staff. I don't know if I was the editor of that or not. Can't recall. I know I was on the staff, but I might have been the editor of the newspaper at the time. And one year, then, I was class president. And whatever else I was doing, music, and--.

DO: Very well rounded, yeah.

JH: Chasing girls. [laughter]

DO: No, yeah. Understandable.

MW: Did you guys like play the white schools in sports and stuff or was that also?

JH: No, we had the CI--I think it was called the CI double--CIAA? No, it wasn't the CIAA. It was--. I can't get the name, the league that it was. We didn't play the white schools, not until, I think, they integrated. They might have had one or two games after I left. I left in 1960. And I can't recall any of the white or local schools playing here, no.

DO: Makes sense. [pause] And you said so the school wasn't--. How was the walk to the school itself? How would that go?

JH: It wasn't bad. Just like I said, you just had to brace yourself for that little trek going down the highway, going over there, you know, if they had--. I don't know if we had rocks or they had rocks coming down, you know. You just had to be careful. [laughter]

DO: It was like a battle?

JH: It was a battle, you know, especially going to the high schools, you know, because there were older kids and, you know, the verbiage wasn't very nice every day. So, you know, if you kind of timed it, if the busses weren't coming, you could get across the highway or sometimes you just waited for the busses to come. So it would just be a verbal battle on that. But that wasn't, you know, too bad to deal with on that. Now,

whether the weather was bad or not, I can't even recall. Rainy days sometimes. But it was, you know, just nice to be able to walk to school and come out of school and just head on across the street and you'd be home. And other kids had to ride, you know, if they came from up the road. All the way up to Richneck Road, had to drive down. Kids from Fort Eustis, in high school, had to come all the way down to Carver, down here and that was a ride for them.

DO: Yeah, that's a hike.

JH: And then I said, well that was a trip of mine, but it wasn't bad.

DO: And you didn't walk by yourself correct, it was with--?

JH: Usually, no. Usually it was with my sisters or I would hook up with my buddy, you know especially after school. Going to school, it depends on who was around at the time. But mostly it was with my sisters and everything. It wasn't a large group of people but whoever just left early. And we had a road crossing guard couple of blocks up the street, right across from the building over there. And then they put a sidewalk down the center of the building which is not there now, and we would go across there. So, it really wasn't--it wasn't very bad, you know. [pause]

MW: You said, like, things got hostile but did you ever feel like you were in danger at all, or--?

JH: Not unless it was--. No, no real danger because I don't think the kids would carry big rocks on the bus, you know. [laughter] Or you know, sometimes spit on you. Or small rocks or whatever like that, you know, throw them out. But, never felt real danger, 'cause it wasn't that long of a walk. You know, maybe, we didn't cross right here at the corner of

Jefferson and South, we crossed about a block up the street, so just that little walk there. Sometimes it would depend on if the bus was coming.

DO: Yeah.

JH: We didn't feel any real danger because the busses would move pretty fast and it would be over like that, unless there was another bus coming behind it or--. [laughter]

MW: Round two.

JH: No, but no real danger or anything like that.

DO: Got you.

MW: Did you ever hear about the Norfolk 17?

JH: At some point in my life I think I heard about it, but I can't bring it to my memory right now.

MW: Okay.

JH: I can't, so I probably was somewhere.

MW: I was just wondering if like that impacted you when you were here, like when you were younger, like if the community talked about it at all or?

JH: I don't-- . I think that's probably after 1960. I can't even remember when that was, if it was.

MW: This was 1958

JH: '58?

MW: Yeah.

JH: Okay, I was in junior high school then. I might have heard but it doesn't register.

MW: Okay, so it probably wasn't that big.

JH: It wasn't that big on me at that time on that.

DO: We've read that you were probably entering Carver around the time of the *Brown vs. Board* decision.

JH: Mmhmm.

DO: Was there any community response to that, or did you have any personal responses to that?

JH: I can't recall any responses to that at the time. I know I probably heard about it.

DO: Yeah.

JH: But as far as how it affected me or the community, I can't say. I really can't say. It wasn't a tremendous impact on me personally, or the community. So I can't really--.

DO: So it sounds like you were, again this neighborhood was very close knit, very separate community from what was going on, so that's--.

JH: So to speak. Now, you know, some of the older folks--more than likely--that you probably will interview, or have interviewed, probably have a better recollection of some of the things. You know, maybe some of the teachers or people or older people here.

Because we didn't either just get involved or--unless I was, maybe, like I said, a sophomore, junior, or senior in school. [I don't recall] how it really affected me because, you know, I think I only read the cartoons, and maybe the sports section in the newspaper. [laughter]

DO: I don't blame you. I do that same thing.

JH: Yeah, we had the *Journal and Guide*, which was a black newspaper that kept us kind of abreast to what was going on, like in Norfolk and the surrounding community, and what was going on in the black community. But the *Daily Press* and the *Times Herald* you know--we weren't as aware of what was going on in the black community elsewhere

and all around unless we got it from the *Journal and Guide*, on that. And I think we took the *Journal and Guide*--maybe a weekly paper if I can recall. I can't remember you know how it--. I think it came weekly, or maybe monthly, or something like that. But some of those things, I just can't remember, you know.

DO: How do you think being class president, as you said, maybe impacted what you wanted to do in your future. Do you think that helped you realize that you were a leader, and--?

JH: [pause] I don't think it gave me--. It put me in contact with more of the classmates that maybe I didn't know. My class was about 117 people in my graduating class. And, if I didn't know all of them before that time, I probably knew them all after that, you know, as far as interacting with them as far as the activities and trying to get them to do different projects and so forth like that. But I don't think that had, at that time, much impact on what I wanted to do. In the back of my mind, I wanted to be an engineer, or something to do with space, you know?

DO: Yeah.

JH: I didn't necessarily want to fly to space, but I wanted to build projects. I wanted to build bridges and stuff like that. I used to like to tear stuff apart and try to put it back together again, you know.

DO: Yeah.

JH: Once I tore it apart, I couldn't put it back together, you know. But that was my goal there. As far as being a leader, the impact it has now--. Our class still meets once a month.

DO: Wow.

MW: Oh, wow.

JH: For lunch, you know, we have what's called--. So we were very close knit group of people. And so we get together for lunch third Tuesday of each month at a different restaurant, or whoever has a birthday chooses what restaurant we go to. So that's how we basically stay in touch. So if we have somebody that's ill or passes away, or the family passes away, we're kind of on top of it, you know. So it's been well over fifty years now since we've been graduated.

DO: Wow, that's awesome.

JH: And so, you know, they still look at me as president of the class. Now I'm supposed to get the reunions and all that stuff together like that, you know. But as far as having an impact, I don't think it had any, you know, leadership impact on me like that. I don't think. Maybe it did.

DO: Yeah.

JH: Back of my mind, maybe it did. I don't know, you know.

DO: That's still awesome that you guys get together like that.

JH: Mmhmm.

MW: Yeah, I've never heard of that before.

JH: Really?

DO: Well, like class reunions every year. But every month, that's real special, that's--.

MW: Yeah, that means you guys were close.

JH: Yeah, we have a lot from Huntington and a lot from Carver. Classes still meet, they still function like that, you know. Huntington High School, which was our rival down the street down there--



DO: Yeah, I was going to ask you that.

JH: They go all the way back to '33 and thirties [twenties]. And they still function.

DO: Yeah, yeah, mmhmm, I've seen that.

JH: And we have a Carver Alumnus group that has a function every November. Have a dance and a reunion so--. In fact, they meet here once a month and then keep the spirit going. Yeah, so that's--. .

DO: Yeah, yeah that's good to hear. Yeah, that's awesome.

JH: Am I talking loud enough?

DO: Yeah! Oh yeah. Oh for sure.

MW: Yeah! Yeah! You're perfect, definitely.

DO: It is a good mic.

JH: I need something like that. [laughter]

MW: So, you graduated in 1960.

JH: Right.

MW: Right. So what made you decide that you wanted to join the military?

JH: Well, basically, we didn't have the funds to go to college. I definitely wanted to go to college, you know. And it basically didn't dawn on me until about graduating time that you know, my mother didn't have the money, you know. So I worked a year at DB Seward, grocery store up there on Main Street and Warwick Boulevard in Hilton. And, I applied at the shipyard, but didn't really want to go to the shipyard, I think. But I said the shipyard would probably pay a little bit better money, just being graduated out of high school and everything. So I was just kind of weighing the odds and everything to what would be my better chances. Do I want to go to the shipyard, or do I need to get more

education, or whatever I have to do? So I decided that I had--. You know, the GI bill was in the military at the time, you know, in the service. So I said, "If I go in the military, I can maybe use the GI bill and maybe still get the school, the college education." So that was my choice there. While I was out that year, I took a drafting class as to see if I could develop my skills in drafting a little bit. I would be close to reaching part of my goal of engineering, something like that. So I just went into the Air Force and said, "If I can go four years, maybe I can get a little of the GI bill and go to school." So I went in and stayed twenty-one years.

DO: Yeah. [laughter]

JH: So it was--. You know, it was good to me. I could have almost got out at four years, but the economic situation wasn't that good here. And I started trying to go to classes, college, based on my work environment. So I took one or two classes, here, there or wherever it was and, you know, realized it was going to take forever, I guess. So I just reenlisted. I think, when I tried to get out, it was a nationwide strike in the telephone company. I was trying to get into a telephone company at the time, so there was a nationwide strike across the United States for some reason, I--

DO: Wow.

JH: First question I asked the person that was interviewing me was, "Have you ever had a strike in the history of the company?" "No, I never have." And I filled out an application and it looked like it was a good situation. Next day newspaper: nationwide strike.

Changed my mind right there.

MW: Timing, yeah.

JH: So I went back into the service and didn't look back, you know.

DO: Yeah.

JH: So, I just went on and did my twenty-one years and enjoyed that. And I kept going to school here, there, picking up bits and pieces of my education until I could get my degree out of the way, you know. It seemed like it took forever, but I did it.

DO: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

MW: What did you do initially when you joined?

JH: When I initially went into the Air Force, I went into the law enforcement--security and law enforcement field--and went up to Niagara Falls, New York. It was the first duty station and did that. And I worked some crazy hours because the Cuban crisis was going on at that time.

DO: Yeah.

JH: So I think I spent six months on the six to six shift--6 PM, 6 AM--so it was dark when I went to work and it was dark when I got off work. So I slept most of the day.

DO: Yeah.

JH: So that was life for about six months during the Cuban crisis.

DO: Wow.

JH: In the back of my mind, I'm still trying to figure out how I can take classes, you know, and work in rotating shifts. Was very, very difficult. And I wanted to go to the University of Buffalo, which was about thirty miles away, and didn't have transportation. So, you know, all of those little small things at the time, you know, knocked that out. Then I went into--. I retrained, went into the communications field, which was the old teletype at that time. I repaired teletype machines. So I did that for three, four years. Then, I retrained into the computer field, the computer technician field. I did that. Then, I

went to the recruiting field. Did that. So, I think that's about three, four different jobs I had on that.

DO: Yeah.

JH: So, that's what I did. I kept retraining to enhance myself and better myself. And during the times I was able to get more stabilized in my job locations and wherever I was, I could take classes here, take classes there. And still, in the back of my mind, trying to get my education out of the way, which was a goal, you know. At some point, I had to complete this thing, you know. So wherever I was, I tried to take a class here, a class there, and tried to melt it all together into something solid.

DO: It must have been time consuming, very time consuming.

JH: Yeah, yeah, but it was interesting. Yeah, interesting, very interesting, very interesting.

DO: So it sounds like you really broadened your horizons in the military. You didn't just stick with one field, you know.

JH: No, no, I was always trying to reach a little bit higher. Whatever I could get, you know, to maybe enhance myself as far as location where I could get assigned and the type of field that I wanted. And still looking maybe at retiring and what I could do when I retired, out of the military.

DO: Were you stationed in multiple areas or--?

JH: Yeah, I initially started off in Niagara Falls, New York. Stayed up there four years. I retrained. Went to Texas for thirty-three weeks for training in that field. Came back to Langley Air Force Base. Stayed one year here. Went to Thailand and Southeast Asia.

Spent a good year there. Came back to-- . Went to Michigan, upper Michigan. Stayed a year there.

DO: Cold.

JH: Cold. [laughter] Retrained, went to Mississippi for a year of training down there in the computer field. Came back to Fort Lee, Virginia, which is in Petersburg. Spent a year there. Went to Germany. I was supposed to stay three years, got it cut to eighteen months, down there. Left Germany, went to California. Left there, went to recruiting school. And came back to Virginia and stayed seven years in Newport News.

DO: Yeah.

JH: And this is where I retired.

DO: Wow. [laughter] That is a lot of places. That is awesome.

JH: Kind of crisscrossed, and you know, different--.

DO: You saw a lot of the country and internationally.

JH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. A lot of different things.

DO: That's awesome.

MW: Did you have a favorite place?

JH: In my mind, I always wanted to go to California. In the back of my mind, I said--. You know, in my reading and my studies and everything, I wanted that free wheeling, easy living of California. And went out there and decided that--. The earthquakes falling off into the water, the grass burns up every year, the pretty green grass turns brown--it burns up. So many natural disasters out there. And, so, I was out there two or three different times to California and decided that Virginia has the beautiful trees, the green

grass. And I missed the green grass in the summer time and so forth. So I finally decided that right here was the best place.

MW: Home.

JH: Yeah, always wanted to get away, didn't want to come back, you know, and I always thought that California--. But home was probably the best place for me. Right here, right in this area, you know. My goal was to try to get to Langley Air Force Base and stay there forever, but I couldn't. Only stayed there one year.

DO: So, and you served during the Vietnam era correct?

JH: Yeah, that's when I went to Thailand. I was blessed that I didn't have to go to Vietnam.

DO: Yes.

MW: Yes.

JH: So I went to Thailand instead, which was a little safer, you know, but we were supporting the Vietnam [effort].

DO: Yeah.

JH: Everything we did supported that. So, you know, we got a few mortars and stuff like that, but it was a lot safer.

DO: What were your time shifts like there?

JH: It was good. You know, as I progressed in rank, I could control my environment a little bit more, a little better.

DO: Yeah.

JH: As I started getting where I could be supervisor, I could make out the schedules and so forth, stuff like that.

DO: Yeah. [laughter]

JH: So it wasn't--. I was working, basically, an eight hour shift. And we rotated, but we could sleep at night, you know. Because of the environment, we had built a little communications building. Everything was built from scratch in Thailand, you know, from the ground up. So we built these little huts. Started off in tents, little army type tents. And then we started getting supplies in, we could build little bit more. Eventually built wood structures or so forth. So, in the communications environment that I was in, we built facilities where we could sleep at night. And was on call--as far as if some communications broke down, you know--we would just be on call. But we could basically go to sleep, you know.

DO: Yeah, so but you were still--. When you say you were still on call, so at any time during the night if you got a call--?

JH: Yeah, we would have to go if the communication equipment broke down or whatever.

DO: Yeah.

JH: Which almost every night something went down. [laughter]

DO: I would figure, yeah.

JH: So you tried to get a good relationship with the operators of the equipment and everything and tell them to back it up to another backup until the morning or something.

DO: Yeah, yeah.

JH: We tried to work it. But, initially, you would have to go out there and try to figure out paper jam, or something like that.

DO: Yeah, so that's what the communications entailed really. Is that like--. What were some of the main duties that you performed?

JH: I was initially in the communications field. I was in the teletype. I don't know if you've seen the old teletype machines. Have you seen the old teletype?

DO: Yeah.

MW: I know--.

JH: You guys probably don't even know what typewriters are, do you? [laughter] Old teletype--you've probably seen movies or whatever: clickity-clackity, clickity-clackity, clackity-clickity, clickity-clickity--and they were old. And you see them in the old war movies. So we were responsible for repairing the equipment if it went bad, and they went bad quite frequently on that. So you had to go in and, if you couldn't repair it on spot, you bring in a replacement, and then take the part back to the shop. So if you can't repair it there, you take it back to the shop and tear it apart, and just fix it back up. So you always had to have a backup type of equipment.

DO: Yeah.

JH: Until I moved into the computer field, which we were--. We had basically up at Fort Lee, the first--I guess we would call them the first generation computers. We had a four story concrete building that housed our computer.

DO: Just for one computer?

JH: Four stories. All the components and everything took four stories.

DO: Wow.

JH: And if you've ever seen the *Star Wars* movies, and the blinking lights of some of the consoles, that's how large they were. The console took up a whole room, the whole side



of this building here, blinking lights and everything. And we had tape decks, four or five tape decks, to--. Then we had drums. We had, on one floor, we just had vacuum tubes and one floor we had consoles with operators.

DO: Wow.

JH: So the equipment took up four stories on there. And then one day somebody said that "We're going to have computers this size." [much smaller] I said, "Never." [laughter]

DO: Yeah, I'm still amazed.

MW: Now even smaller.

JH: There it is.

DO: Yeah.

JH: And even smaller than that. So I don't even know how to tear that apart. I'm used to the old vacuum tubes, about this size. What we would do at night--or it didn't have to be at night because it was always dark in there--the vacuum tubes were lit. You know, you had to always keep it very cold because of the tubes and everything. So we had vacuum tubes in racks and, if they were out in the dark, it was easy to replace, you know. Take the whole rack out, and replace it with another one. You know before that, you had to go out and get the individual tube that was bad on that. And so now, you're dealing with the microchips--you know, very small microchips now that replaced all these things like that. So, I mean it was interesting because you could move around, had a lot of space and everything like that. And it kept you going. Tape decks had big tape drives. From here, here the tape drives. You ever see the old tape drives?

DO: No. [laughter]

JH: And you had to back them up. Now it took--. We were responsible for air defense. We were at Fort Lee in Virginia. We were responsible for air defense from New Jersey down to Florida, where any aircraft coming in, so we covered all of that. One computer had to be up at all times. If the system went down, we had three minutes to get it back up. So, on one side of the room, was the main computer and over here was the backup. So we would always be working on one computer. You know, if any maintenance, or any problems over here, we would be working on it. If the computer went down--the mainframe went down--we had to get this one up in three minutes so whatever we were doing, we had to stop and get that up. If we couldn't get that back up, we had to send all of the data to another location so they could have that instant backup. Could have the computer down for three minutes, we were in a crisis situation after three minutes. So, that's how quick it was. We used to have tours up there, they would bring visitors in. But it was old *Star Wars* type, which was interesting.

DO: Sounds like it.

JH: So, if I went to a different location, and it was a different computer, I had to be retrained on the computer--the system--because all of the systems were different.

MW: Yeah.

JH: Some were smaller. There wasn't nothing larger than that one. [laughter] As the stuff progressed, technology progressed, it got smaller and smaller. And then, once I got out of the field into recruiting, all of that knowledge was gone because, by that time, it was this small, you know.

DO: It's different.

JH: So I had to keep retraining just like--. I don't know if they do it now or not, you know. Programmers had a separate location; whereas you could probably program your own thing now, we had separate programmers who would program the computers. And I don't know how they program them now.

DO: I couldn't either, I'm telling you.

JH: I'm lost there.

DO: I couldn't, no sir.

MW: So, what was it like segregation-wise?

JH: In the military?

MW: Yes.

JH: Well, because of the rules and regulations, there were laws and rules, you know. Of course, you know, we had people coming from different parts of the country, different parts of the world, mingling together. And we sort of had to kind of live together. But, of course, separate, you know. The blacks usually went to the dining room, usually mingled together, ate together, probably still do that in cafeterias and so forth like that. But, if there was segregation, we segregated ourselves primarily. But when you went off of the base, that was the danger area there. Because, you know, you could only basically--. Depending on where you were in the world or in the country, in the Southern part, in North Carolina on down, [there were] certain places you just couldn't go, that were still off limits to you. And if you--. Well, just to give you a quick example. I was in Mississippi going through computer school and went out to eat one time--this was still back in the '60s--and went out to eat and wasn't thinking, wasn't thinking. Sitting in the restaurant, waiting to get served, and everything. And, it took--. It just seemed like it took

a long time, you know. The waitress or waiter didn't come by and I'm just waiting. I'm just minding my own business--I don't know, might have had a book or something--just reading. And maybe a half hour later, I said, "Something's wrong here." [laughter] Nobody said anything, not a word, not a word. And I said, I looked around, and I said, "Am I the only black in here?" I think I was. I just had to make a decision to get up and leave because, apparently, they didn't want me in there to eat. But nobody said anything at the time. And I don't think I had my--. I might have had my military uniform on. And maybe that's why I stood there the longest time. But you kind of knew where to go and where not to go, you know, as far as integration was going and so forth. Now, I found in Mississippi while I was down there, blacks and whites lived close together in some houses, but they didn't function together. There was separation. There was equal but separate, if you can use that term like that.

DO: Yeah.

JH: They didn't go to school together, even when I was in Mississippi in the late '60s. You know, I don't think they integrated the schools down there. I wasn't here when they integrated this area here, so I don't know how the environment was. But we had incidents that you just had to be cool. We had race relations classes. Whenever something developed or happened, we had race relation classes to try to get up on top of it. I don't know if you guys remember the Angela Davis cases--that goes back too far--out in California. The Black Panthers, you remember the Black Panther situations out there?

DO: Yeah.

JH: Right around that time, they had--. Angela Davis was a black activist. I think she's now a professor at one of the colleges out in California. Late '60s, early '70s, black

power came out. I'm trying to see what you guys remember here: the Olympics, Carlos, and the guys on the on the stand.

MW: The fist sign.

JH: Gave the black power fist. One had a black glove on like that. It was black power. That caused a lot of confusion in the military. Around that time--. So when you go down the street and you're passing somebody, and you're raising your hand, just greeting the brothers or whatever, you're in the car, you stick your hand out of the window, greeting the brothers and everything. The base commander called all of the blacks together in a big hanger [and asked,] "What is going on?" So we, individually or in groups or whatever, had to explain what was going on. Because he didn't want any disruption on his installation or his base, for whatever the situation was. But he had to get a feeling of what was happening in the black community because, out in California, the Black Panther movement started, and it was black power. It was black power. It just swooped all around. And then it got into the military and the brothers just kept on, you know, [embracing] black power. And they started meeting in their little groups and talking about the Angela Davis case. And we couldn't do very much in the military. But off base, you had to deal with the civilians down there, so we had to be ready for if you went off base. So if there was segregation in the facility, and it got back to the base, the base commander would put the place off limits to everybody. So if they found out--. This is how it kind of evolved: if you went to a place and you weren't served, or if there was too much tension or race relations, [they] started trying to make it better for everybody, they would put it off limits. So they would post this, either weekly or monthly, where you couldn't go. So if you went in the place, and something happened, the military police

dealt with you in that case. But, we had to deal in the military with what was going on in the civilian sector, where you were, you know. .And it got all the way over to Germany because, you know, when you rotate from one place to another, you bring that stuff with you.

DO: Yeah.

JH: So even the Germans got on you. You know, the brothers wanted to wear their boots in a certain way and wanted to have the black power, and the Germans were trying to figure out what's going on over here. "Are you guys going to have a race riot over here?" So, we dealt with it differently.

DO: Yeah.

JH: We had instances where, in Germany we went to a kind of remote part of Germany and the little kids walking down behind you. And they're looking behind you, and they want to touch your hair. And it's like, "What are you doing?" [And the children were looking to see if you had tails because some of the guys that had been over there years before told the women or people that blacks have tails, and blacks have this--you know, different stories about blacks--and they have kinky hair that will shock you or whatever it will do. And I had curly hair and the little kids wanted to touch my hair to see if it would shock them or whatever it would do, like that. So you had to overcome a lot of things that was said that were negative that you had to try to deal with, you know. Even with trying to get housing in certain parts of the country, certain parts of Germany, even Europe. You would think it wouldn't be so much in Europe, but the guys and the girls that was over there before told so many lies and so many negative things about the blacks that we had to overcome a lot of things like that. On base, no problem. You go off base, it's a whole

different world, like I said, because you had to deal with both environments like that. So [there were] little subtle things that you try to deal with. And, you know, I think the military kind of isolated me to a certain degree--me and my family and that, you know--because we were kind of protected, but we weren't fully protected from everything that was going on. So I imagine if I was here in the '60s, I would have probably been involved in the sit-ins, more than likely, on that. Because when I came back from California where all of the black power--that's where it started--I had a different attitude. I had kind of a negative attitude because of all of the things that were going on out there. And all of the movements--seemed like everything started in California. Yeah, the Black Power, the Black movement: you went downtown in San Francisco at that time with the Black Power, it was hot. Folks would not come out on the street. They would keep the curtains closed because they feared that the police was targeting them, the FBI was targeting them. I think that everything was kind of undermining the U.S. and so forth. So I think the military kind of isolated a lot of folks from a lot of things.

DO: It definitely seems like there were two sides of the spectrum where you were in the military. And while there were formal rules in place to prevent segregated stuff--. It just sounds probably frustrating when you would leave and--. You leave where there is no real segregation to where it's still the same. When you were stationed, where did you see that the worst? Where was the segregation outside, off base, the worst? [pause]

JH: Germany.

DO: Germany? Really?

JH: Germany, and this was early '70s. It was very different, very different, either because of the stuff that was going on in the U.S.--. And you'd think because the U.S. had been in

Germany for so long at that time, trying to get housing on the private sector versus getting your family into an on-base location and everything--. In Germany, where I was-- I was in Wiesbaden, Germany--the location was there. It was sort of a proper type of environment or community, whatever the traditions were. So when I went there, I was supposed to have a three year tour of duty. But I got so frustrated I just kept pushing and pushing, until I got it knocked down to 18 months. I was only there 18 months over there because, first of all, trying to get housing, you know. I didn't have the transportation. My car was here, my wife here, and I was looking to bring them over. I couldn't bring them over with me at the time, [so I was] trying to get housing close by. And you felt so much [tension]. You could see it. You could see the people, how they reacted. It was just so different. And my frame of mind was thinking that it was going to be a little easier. I can bring my family, totally different environment over here, won't have the pressure of race relations going on and all that. And then the young guys brought that black power over there [laughter] and then the community started closing down saying "Okay, we don't want blacks in here because they start talking black power and stuff we don't understand over here," and I said, "Well then, if I can't get my family over here, you know, I got to get out of here." You know? So that's where I felt it most, even though, you know, I had it in--. Mississippi wasn't as tough as I thought it was. I always thought Mississippi was going to be a tough [place]. Biloxi, Mississippi--it wasn't as bad as I thought it was. I've had more discrimination in New York, upstate New York, than I did in Mississippi.

DO: That's surprising, too, honestly.



JH: Yeah, especially with housing. You know, I didn't anticipate that. But I did--. The folks that was in Mississippi weren't as vocal and as bad as I anticipated in my mind, but the folks up in upstate New York were.

DO: Yeah.

MW: So was the military against blacks, like, participating in sit-ins and stuff, if you were enlisted?

JH: Oh yes. Yes, Lord. You know, you couldn't be seen in a uniform. And don't get caught out there in a uniform. In fact, they had a different dress code when you left the base. You couldn't wear your fatigues, we call them, when I was off base unless you were going directly home. You either had to have your dress uniform on in that respect--. So they were very strict on sit-ins and the Martin Luther King march. I was in New York and they were putting out information left and right that, you know, basically don't go down there. [laughter] It was kind of frightening you to death, you know. Just don't get caught out there. We don't want it, we don't want this image on the military, we don't want anything having to do with the military [in a ] negative aspect. Definitely don't go out there in uniform, you know. So my thing [response] at the time was like, "Golly." You know, I was so far away anyway up in New York, I wasn't about to go down there. But even if I wanted to go down there, I said, "God, what's the consequences?" You know, you will get kicked out of the military, you know. But certainly they had a different--. So they were trying to maintain that image, which I can understand that.

DO: So they would almost informally allow you to go if you weren't wearing your uniform?

JH: Right, if you were on vacation or if you had time. But don't just try and take off to get down there and don't make it back to work the next day or something like that. Yeah, so they--. Yeah, that's the way it was.

DO: Were there any examples of that occurring like within your base? Like fellow soldiers--.

JH: No, I was up in upstate New York at the time and I didn't have anybody to go down with, not that I heard of anyway, you know.

MW: So you, over your life even after the military, did you ever do any, like, protests or sit-ins or anything like that? Or by the time you got out was that basically all done?

JH: Yeah, basically all done. I wanted to when I was in California [laughter] because the atmosphere was so saturated with everything that was going on. It was a tense atmosphere down there. But I was conscious and I had a little bit more rank this time, had a little bit more knowledge, so I said, "You better not go out here and get caught, then the military finds out about it." But off base it was--. I mean, it was tense. The atmosphere-- like I said, you could go into San Francisco--the atmosphere was just like you don't want to get caught walking down the street, it seemed like. I recall I was with someone, trying to visit somebody, and drapes were drawn. And I don't know if they were with a part of a certain movement or not, but they were peeping out peepholes, like "Who is this?" A very paranoid type of environment and that type of thing. In fact, I brought a couple of posters back you know, of President Nixon. There was a pregnant woman and it said "Nixon is the one." [laughter] And I hung it up in my bathroom for the longest time, but my attitude had changed. That was a time that I started being more aware of my

blackness, more aware of my environment, more aware of what, or how people were treated. So stuff like that.

DO: Because it sounds like you probably had to make some sort of adjustment from where you grew up, where it sounds like there wasn't--there obviously was some segregation with the kids on the bus and stuff--but it sounds like you may have had to make an adjustment from here to going to different cities in the military where you experienced those--.

JH: Exactly, sort of. If you were growing up and you're used to certain things--this is the way of life, you know. When I was growing up, we didn't know any different, you know. My mother says go in the back of the bus, I didn't question why we had to go back there. I started smelling diesel fuel so I started liking the smell of diesel fuel, you know. Didn't know until maybe I was a teenager why I had to go in the back of the bus, you know. Don't go in this neighborhood over here, you know. Now [I] recall, in playing baseball, now we didn't have interaction that you asked with the white teams. But less than a mile up the street, Hilton had a Little League baseball field, ok. We didn't have Little League baseball. We played behind the school over here. So when we wanted to play baseball--we wanted to play the white guys up in Hilton--we had to do it while, you know--. We couldn't really access the field so we made games up with the white guys. But we tried to do it where nobody knew about it. You know, whoever was running the field, open the field up--the adults. We got together and played, pretty much like that. So we had to play within our own group. And, trying to get the equipment, you know, you just couldn't--didn't have the equipment to play, you know, baseball, or football, or stuff like that. It was just not available. It was just a way of life that, you know, "Why couldn't we?"

“Well, I don't know, I don't know.” You had to do something else. It just wasn't available at the time, you know. There wasn't too much you could do about it as a young kid. It was there, in the back of your mind, and it just comes back to memory every now and then when you bring it up. You know, what was going on, you know. So it was basically-- I live a couple blocks down over there and I couldn't cross Jefferson Avenue when I was young. That was taboo, because there was no traffic lights. It was a two lane road and it was very dangerous because, from Mercury Boulevard up there, it was [sound of swishing traffic] you know. So you had to-- I couldn't go across there unless I had an adult or someone. So even my neighbors across the other side of the street over there-- when they went to church, we knew them--but I couldn't go over there. So I didn't know exactly everybody on that side of the street over there like that. So that's why I said it was kind of closed for a long time for me until you start growing and you start being aware of what's going on. And then, as I said, when I go on into the military: boom, lot of different cultures, lot of different people, lot of different attitudes. And, just to give you one quick example: I am in Thailand on New Year's Eve, and a white coworker was sitting there--almost midnight on New Year's Eve--talking, telling lies, and whatever. He knew I had a son about six years old or something like that, or nine years old, or whatever. And I made a comparison. He's from Maine. First black he's seen was when he came into the military. So, you know, we started relating our lives to him, and we were feeling sorry for each other and all this crazy stuff. So I said, “Hey man, what about when my son gets old and he marries your daughter?” [pause] That joker likely freaked out on me. He did freak out on me. [He] jumped up [and said,] “Never in this world will that happen!” Started cursing at me, I couldn't figure out what was going on. So we was just

telling lies and trying to do different scenarios, and end up talking about the kids. And he jumped up off of the cot, or whatever we were on, ready to fight. I said, “What is wrong?” “Nah that’ll never happen.” So this--. You know, the little lights start coming on to me at that time, you know. I said, “Well, this guy, he’s from Maine. He never saw blacks until he went into the military—[he’s] a grown man now--never saw blacks, saw them on TV and everything. And I lost him as a friend. We were coworkers, worked together real good, but he just went off on me. And I couldn’t figure it out. I say, “Well, okay.” I come to the conclusion that black and whites don’t mingle as far as marriage is concerned. You know, that was his main thing. You know, blacks don’t marry white women like that. So, it took me a long time to piece it together, but I lost him as a friend. He didn’t want to have anything to do with me and that was the weirdest thing that I ever experienced in my life, you know? Just the conversation--. But, it was in the back of his mind, whatever it was, a black man don’t marry white woman so I--.

DO: That’s the way he grew up.

JH: Mmhmm. And I found that to be the case with a lot of the white men. They don’t want the black men to associate with the white women. That was the kicker that caused a lot of problems. So I said, “Ahhh, that’s what it is.” That’s basically what it was all about, you know, especially in Germany when they were telling all them lies and tales about the black men--you know, they grow tails and stuff come out of their hair, and all this crazy stuff, like that. So it was little small stuff like that, you know.

DO: So, basically the thing about the civil rights movement, what do you think are the most important, maybe, accomplishments that they were able to get done? What do you

think were some of the turning points where you really started seeing legitimate change in?

JH: Well, the first thing was education in the grade schools. Now I don't know if that was a good thing, at the time, the distances that the kids had to travel. My son had to travel a long way to get to school. The school was a couple blocks away from here. You go way up to Denbigh from where we were living. But the educational part--. Even though we had good education, we didn't have the tools and the equipment, the proper--you know, as I mentioned--books and so forth like that. But having that access to the educational part, I think that was the first thing that comes into my mind, that makes a change there. And the environment for the people behind me to be able to shop where they want to go, eat where they want to go eat at, and basically the work environment may be better, you know. We still have problems in our work environment in certain situations. But I think the most important thing was getting access to that education, even though we had the GI Bill. We had, I think back, we had a couple programs that was going that was favoring blacks that some of the whites didn't like. But I think that was important, you know. It might have helped me at the time, I don't know. [laughter] But that comes out as probably in my mind.

MW: Did you see any push back when you were trying to use your GI Bill?

JH: No, no. Most of the classes that I took were on bases. Like in Germany, I tried to take German. Was on base classes, and Langley down here. I took classes at Christopher Newport. No push back on that. In fact, I worked at the VA office at Christopher Newport, trying to get guys the money and the loans and everything like that. But I didn't see any push back at all, not for myself. No, no.

MW: So like, if you had to say, like--. So, obviously, like, the civil rights movement you would say is unfinished. What would you say is the one thing that you still want to see accomplished?

JH: [pause] That's a good question now. Some of the small things that, you know, that you guys might not be aware of. Or just how you live and living conditions. But I think it would be in the work place, work places: the mindset of people. And I think education is still the key to the fact [that] as we become better educated, more educated, we learn more about how to deal with people, how to interact with people. I just noticed that-- either yesterday or this morning--discrimination suit [was brought] against certain aspect of the Newport News Shipyard: discrimination in the workplace, wages, attitude, work environment situations, that [makes] you say, "This don't make any sense that this stuff is still going on like that." For example, I think it's somewhere way up on Warwick Boulevard, an aspect of the Newport News Shipyard, they are making it a discrimination [charge] because they say now, the blacks have been discriminated [against], first of all, because of wages and then conditions. Certain tradesmen--. They say the blacks or certain groups weren't unable to talk to each other during the day. I said, "This don't make any sense." Whereas the white coworkers were able to interact. It almost sounds crazy that blacks were allowed to sit on buckets versus the whites who were able to sit in chairs, you know. Sounds stupid, you know, this day and time. What's the attitude of people, you know? How does this still happen? Why are they still thinking this [way], you know? 'Cause, you know, that would be in my age group and above, not your guys' age group, you know. 'Cause y'all think differently, you know. You function differently. You might have been from parents who might have brought a few things down like that.

But, you know, I wouldn't expect that from anybody under 35 years old. You know, this day in the millennial age and everything like that. But this day and time, what's the problem? Is it education? Do we need in our work environment--? You can't bring federal government down and impose a lot of things on civilian type of work places. But, you know, little small stuff bugs the heck out of you, you know, when you think about it, you know.

MW: Stuff where it's like how is this still a problem?

JH: How is this still a problem? Why do I have to sit on a bucket, you know, when chairs are available? Why can't I interact with my coworkers, you know? But its private sector. Has their own problems and everything like that. And trying to keep the federal government off. Folks say that federal government doesn't have to regulate a lot of stuff, which is true, but if you didn't have the federal government in there, then you lose out on a lot of things. The federal government sometimes backs up the stuff, you know, equal opportunity and things like that, you know when you bring them out. So, something in there.

DO: It's absurd to even really think about. I can't believe I didn't hear about that, you know?

JH: Yeah, it's all the small stuff, just crazy, you know. It doesn't make any sense, you know.

DO: So, getting back to education what, made you pursue your doctorate?

JH: I guess more my wife. [laughter] I was pursuing my--. I did my undergraduate bachelor's degree in 2002. You know, I had an associate degree. I had two associate degrees somewhere back in '79 and the early 2000s. And then I had this calling to go into



the ministry and I started taking biblical classes and so forth. So I found out that, you know, my calling was in the ministry. So, I started pursuing my undergraduate degree in biblical studies, you know. There goes space and all that stuff. So it really interested me and I got excited about that. So all the books I was reading on--. You know, any other books, I just couldn't read. I just hit the Bible and biblical studies. It was just on my mind all the time so I went and got the undergraduate degree and then I just kept on going--for my masters, at the time. But I was getting burned out, you know, by this time. Because--. You know, I am retired from almost everything now. But I had the time now to do this. So my wife said, "Why don't you just go on and get the doctorate?" I said, "I don't have the energy." I kept saying, "I don't have the energy," but she kept pushing me. I don't think if she didn't really push me, I probably wouldn't have done it because of the work involved and everything like that. So she kept going and I just kept after it. And I said it wasn't as bad as I anticipated, you know, once I got in there and reading all these books and doing all this research and everything. Yeah, it came out pretty good. It didn't take as long as I thought it would. It took me about three years. It didn't take me as long because I could concentrate on it and didn't have any children to worry about. I didn't have any work environment to worry about and everything. I say, "Well, I could have done this earlier." [laughter] You know, but I haven't done very much to, you know, use it. I keep thinking at my age--. I keep individually thinking about age as a barrier. But my age is not necessarily a barrier to me as far as, you know, wanting to use it, maybe as a teaching tool, or whatever like that, you know. But I think if she hadn't pushed me, I don't think I would have did any more school. But it was so interesting. I couldn't stop after I got my undergraduate. I just couldn't stop. I had to keep on going, really.

DO: So you're glad to have done it then?

JH: Oh yeah, no doubt about it. It was, you know--. Education was always my goal, you know, even though the field wasn't in my mind. You know, going into the ministry, you know. So I think the Lord put that on me, just as I was retiring and everything. So I said, "Well okay, I'll go ahead and do that." But I'm glad I did it. I'm glad I did it, you know. I might end up down at Christopher Newport one day. I don't know.

MW: Hey, come on down. [laughter]

DO: I'll take your class.

MW: How do you feel you--. I mean how do you feel that getting your Ph.D. had benefited you?

JH: [pause] In my latter years, as I am now, I try not to push it where it would be an advantage to me. As far as the ministry, I have preached at a lot of different churches with the intent, possibly, of maybe applying for a pastorate at a particular church and everything like that. I think that would be the largest benefit to me. But, for some reason, I guess--. I'm 73 years old, and I'm looking realistically. If I pursued a pastorate degree, age might really be a factor in there. But, if I was a little bit younger, no doubt about it--I would try to do that. I try to shy away from teaching. I want to shy away from teaching, but I think the teaching aspect is probably more beneficial for me. And I think it puts me in a better position if I decide to do some teaching and all that, even if I just did it on that. So I have to determine which way the Lord want me to go, you know. I keep saying I don't want to teach, I don't want to teach, but [laughter] I want to put this misery on somebody else too. [laughter] Go read fifteen books this semester, you know. [laughter]

DO: So we also saw that you are active in the North Newport News Civic League.

JH: Yeah.

DO: When did you become involved?

JH: About 1975, when I moved into this community.

DO: Okay.

JH: Yeah, so I live right across the street there. And so I just joined since I came to the community. And, now, I am the treasurer of the community. And it kind of pushed me into--. I guess I was fairly young in '75, probably 35 years old something like that. So I guess I just wanted to be involved in the community, really. So I have been involved ever since then to help them get curbs and gutters. I helped them get this building here. I guess I was instrumental. I don't want to say that, but we went to city council. We found out that the city bulldozed the old building that we had--there is a picture of it out there--bulldozed the building over one day. It was just awe and shock. Why did they do that? So we all got together and went to city hall council meeting. About half of the community was down there. And I was told to get up and speak. And, after I spoke, they changed their mind, said "We going to build you guys a building." I said, "Ahhh!" Folks called me up on the phone the next day saying, "Why don't you join the city council?" I said "I don't want to have anything to do with politics." [laughter] But it was very interesting. A guy called me up that morning and told me, "We're going to the city council meeting tonight. I want you to get something together and talk about the building," and so forth like that. So I've been involved. And we helped get the curbs and gutters because of the community. It's been here such a long time. We try it keep it going, as best as possible. So we are trying to help them out. [pause]

MW: So, do you have any other questions?

DO: In regards to that no, I just want to make, I guess, some closing statements here. Is there anything else you would like to contribute or feel we may have missed to ask, any memories as a child that you cherish to this day still?

JH: Now what I am thinking, while you guys are interviewing me here, is that you're trying to do this thing on civil rights, I guess. And I don't have much information on civil rights and everything. You know, I think about the newspaper. They always go for whatever's negative, you know. They put the negative aspect with everything. But I think it has been kind of interesting. I can't think of too much that would come to my mind other than, like you gentlemen said, that you don't find very many communities like this, even in this city. Because it is so diverse now, you go away to different states, you can have people living next door to you that you don't know very much. That was the case when I was in California. My sister was out there. She didn't know her next door neighbor and I'm thinking, back here, everybody knows everybody here. Why isn't every community like this? And, they really looked out for each other as far as somebody new comes to the community, somebody is walking through the community that we don't really [know], not really aware of, somebody selling drugs in the community or doing stuff like that, you know. We kind of bring that out and, specifically, it helps us to keep that in mind, to be aware of our environment. And we have a diverse group of people living in the community now versus before. Everybody is not as related as they used to be. In some ways that's good, in some ways that's bad. Now, as far as the civil rights, because we have different people living--. We have blacks and whites. We usually didn't have any whites live in the community. We have whites living in the community now, whereas before we didn't, but I think that's good that you can get diverse communities.

But if we had the activities like we have in the civic league in each community, or each area, I think it would be better communities. You know, where folks could look out for each other. The thing about “it takes a village to raise a child” or whatever like that would come out it, would be a little bit better. I don't think you--. I have given you too much to miss other than--. [pause] When we are--. How can I put this? [pause] Unity brings about strength. I found that going out to city council meeting. When the community got together, we'd go down to the council meeting, for different things. We, you know, we have a gentlemen that you might have interviewed, Arthur Keyes. I don't know who interviewed him on that. He has got all the information that you guys would want [laughter]. He used to go down to the city council meeting, every city council. In fact, he's got so many times he's been there, they have a special seat for him. And so when you are watching the council meeting on TV, you can see him. And he's gotten a little ill now so the president of our civic league basically goes down there now. And we found out that, as a unified group, we can get more accomplished through the city or city council instead of individuals. Now, we encourage individuals to call for different problems that we have. You know, if there's crime or something going on. You know, we try and encourage them to call. But when we go as a unit, as a group, we have more impact on the city government. You with me on that? And that's what we try to encourage, yeah. You know, unity. Group efforts makes an impact, especially on the political scene. If they are political you know, they are worried about their vote and everything and the stronger you are in the voting aspect. And that's another thing about the civil rights movement, the voting aspect, you know. That is very strong and very powerful, the vote. And we can see across the nation now where they are trying to

suppress the vote in different areas and in different cities and different states and so forth. Their vote is very important and I think that's what has come out of the civil rights movement: the voting rights.

DO: Because of the unity.

JH: Unity on that and the strength. And they are trying to keep primarily the blacks-- whether you want to believe it or not--from voting because if we can get together as a group--black group--voting or whatever, there is a lot of strength there. Who to vote for. And that way we can--when we come to council, when we come to city government, or federal government, or whatever it is, you have that power as a group. That makes the change. It makes a difference. So that's why we try to stay together, try to keep the young people encouraged, especially the new millennium. There is always a new change there for that group you know. Y'all are a different mindset. [laughter] So trying to get into your heads, get your heads out of the computer [laughter] and all that.

DO: Parents tell me that every day.

JH: Is that right? You live at home.

DO: Um, not right now, but when I am at home, yeah. It's like, "Go outside Dane," or you know.

JH: Where are you from?

DO: I'm from Fredericksburg. Yes, sir.

JH: Where are you from?

MW: Yorktown, my dad's in the military, though. So I have lived all over.

JH: Yorktown. Let me see, it's either Navy or Air Force.

MW: Navy. [laughter]

JH: Yeah, I think it has been interesting, you know. As you guys put this thing together, maybe you'll come up with one or two sentences that you can use. [laughter]

DO: We'll use the whole thing.

JH: Is it just the whole class?

DO: Yeah. Every other like group is interviewing someone else. Then we are all submitting projects.

JH: Yeah, so you will run across the same, similar--

DO: Yeah.

JH: You're going to get Mr. Keyes.

DO: Yeah. I think she probably tried to like find, you know, people in like different areas, most likely. So yeah, you're right. It wouldn't be the exact same thing but I would assume, for the most part, it's like a lot of the same experiences and--.

JH: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, like Mr. Keyes, I know he is on the schedule somewhere. And Ms. Foster. Mr. Keyes, we used to call him the mayor of North Newport News. He's got a lot of information in his head. So he can pick all that stuff out.

DO: Just hearing everything, first[hand] account from someone that went through it, you know, it's very rewarding. I'm glad that, and I think you can probably speak to it too, that like our teacher decided to do this 'cause it's not a normal class, like you know. You get to meet someone like you that knows a lot, very knowledgeable, about everything. And it is way more rewarding than probably learning it from a book.

MW: Or reading online about it and then doing a book report.

JH: Yeah, yeah.

DO: Yeah. Or slides. Yeah, 'cause this is definitely a lot more worth it.

JH: Yeah. What's that? I'm trying to think of that--. Can't think of that book [pause] about the slaves up in, not too far from here from. Between Petersburg--. Where they, how they tried to suppress the slave. What's this guy? If you guys in history, ya'll might-- how long have you guys been in history?

MH: We're not history majors so--

JH: Oh, you're not history majors?

DO: Minors, minors. Sorry.

JH: Oh, ok. Alright. Link, link, link.

MH: I feel like I've heard of the book you're talking about but I don't remember the name of it.

JH: Link, link, link. Yeah, how they said that, if you keep the blacks in a certain mindset, they would, you know, be like that for a long time. Lynch? Link? Link or Lynch. Lynch, Lynch, Lynch. What's his name?

MH: Lynchburg?

JH: No, not Lynchburg. Ok, I can't get it right now. But it's very interesting how they suppressed the thinking of the blacks. Like they were inferiors, the whites were superior. And there's a couple other things in there. And this still goes on. To this day, you can-- the effects of it.

DO: Yeah.

JH: Of that. So I can't remember. I can't think of that stuff right now.

DO: I'll have to look that up then.

JH: If I can--. I might have a copy but I can't think of it. Lynch? Link? Something with Lynch.



DO: Ok.

MH: Ok. We'll look it up.

JH: Alright.

DO: Alright. Well, yeah, I think that concludes--

JH: Well, I hope you gentlemen can use a little bit of that.

MH: We can use all of it. Don't worry.

DO: Trust me. Yeah.

**END OF INTERVIEW**

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